LABOUR MONTHLY

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Editor: R. Palme Dutt

Britain's Economy and Peace ★ R.P.D.

Forward from Geneva ★ Quæstor

Means Test in Housing ★ T. Balmer

A Prospect of Portland Place ★ Judith Todd

Heroic Story ★ Wm. Gallacher

*

Unpublished Letters of Frederick Engels

September, 1955

One shilling and sixpence

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ON THE BEAT

DOWN a side street in Central London I caught sight of LABOUR MONTHLY well displayed in a newsagent's window. A few yards on, there was another. Turning the corner I saw a street-seller fixing up a row of them against the wall. I recognised the young man handing them to him—an office worker who is a keen L.M. reader.

'So this is your beat! How do you do it?' I asked our friend.

'Choosing the right places, getting the magazine there early in the month and turning up regularly so that they count on me.'

'But it must take a long time?'

'Two dinner hours a month.'

'How did you come to select these particular places?'

'I decided only to begin what I was sure I could finish. So I kept the choice to those near home, near work or on the route as I bike to and fro. I'm lucky that way, because it's mostly in the centre of London where there are many to choose from. You might say there are three main centres. I've done very well near a couple of pubs where many trade union branches hold their meetings—that's perhaps the best of the lot. Unluckily, there are no big factories about, but we get good results from a shop by the Power Station. Then there's the University, Museum and some big hospitals—that means students, research workers and so on. Another centre is where there are many colonial people living, with quite a few shops with foreign-language papers—French, Italian, German and Greek.'

'How did you make a start?'

'Well, there again I was lucky. I started in the middle of the London newspapers dispute—because of it, in fact. The newsagents had plenty of room for display and were short of stuff, so I didn't hesitate in taking the plunge. Not that there has been any difficulty about those I've approached for the first time since then. But it made for confidence to begin with. Then it's good business for them, you know—6d. per copy clear profit.'

'What's the drill about it?'

'As soon as I get my copies, I take them to work and in the dinner hour I go quickly round to my nearest customers, hand over the number they want, and pick up any unsolds and the shilling for each sold last month. All cash, no bother. I can cover half of them in one dinner hour. I do the rest next day. In the middle of the month when biking to or from work, I may drop in at one or two of the best in case they have sold out—and to see if they are still displaying it well.'

'You must have learnt a lot—what in particular?'

'Mostly, that you can't sell without a good display. Branches of the big news-stand chains haven't got the space; they're interested in quick mass sales and the managers are tied down by Head Office red tape. So they can't be bothered much, except in filling orders for regular

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Notes of the Month

Britain's Economy and Peace

Naturally, if international tension were to be permanently relaxed, the problem of the double burden would fade away. Without that, the prospect is forbidding. . . . Those who can see the end of the cold war can see the escape from the dilemma. For the rest, the dilemma remains.

(The Times, 'The Burden of Public Spending', July 18, 1953.)

WHEN the Trades Union Congress meets in September, and the Labour Party Conference in the following month, the delegates will be meeting in the midst of a new international situation, and also in a new situation in Britain. Since Geneva, there is at least the hope and the possibility that ten years of cold war may be approaching an end, or, at any rate, a considerable relaxation, if the promising possibilities opened up by the success of the Conference of Heads of States in July, and by the positive and co-operative character of the International Atomic Energy Conference in August, are carried forward in the further testing of October. Such a change in the international situation does not

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mean only a change in international relations. It means a change in the economic position and prospect, and in the internal political situation, in every country, and not least in Britain.

Towards a New Era

We are approaching a new era in the possibilities of rapid technical and economic development throughout the world, as the proceedings of the Geneva Conference on the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy have revealed. These proceedings have demonstrated that the possibilities of effectively and economically harnessing atomic and hydrogen energy as a source of cheap and abundant power in all the territories of the world are now drawing very much more closely into view (within a matter of two decades at the outside, as a 'conservative estimate', according to the Conference Chairman, Dr. Bhabba) than the previous sceptical estimates put out in official Western quarters, when attention was concentrated primarily on the bomb, had allowed. Undoubtedly within capitalist world conditions this can give rise to a host of new problems, as the competitive rush of private companies in the United States and Britain to cash in on the commercial exploitation of atomic energy has indicated. But if international co-operation can be established for the peaceful use of atomic energy, in place of the cold war policies which have been the heaviest brake on progress during the past ten years, then indeed a new vista would open up for the world, not merely of new technical advance, but of basic social changes which the new technical advance would render more and more inescapably necessary, and which could alone fully utilise the technical advance.

Responsibilities of Leadership

To respond in a positive and constructive fashion to the new possibilities and prospects opening out for Britain and the world in the present situation, and to combat every tendency to cling to and seek to maintain the old cold war policies of the past decade, is the special responsibility of the labour movement in this new phase, which should govern the proceedings alike of the Trades Union Congress and of the Labour Party Conference. Only such a response can replace the present welter of confusion on policy by a strong and confident line of direction and orientation. Only the fulfillment of this responsibility can justify the claim to political leadership.

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Deteriorating Economic Situation

It is the characteristic paradox of the present situation in Britain —and this problem will necessarily be in the forefront for both conferences—that, at the same moment as the international situation shows an improvement, the economic situation in Britain shows a dangerous worsening. The balance of payments crisis, familiar in 1947 and 1949 and 1951, and only temporarily by-passed in 1953, not so much by any basic change in the conditions causing it, but mainly by a temporary shift in the terms of trade, has returned by the second half of 1954, and shows signs of mounting steeply in 1955. The trade gap for the first seven months of this year is nearly as high as for the whole of 1954. The gold and dollar reserves have fallen far below the level when the Labour Government went out of office in 1951, and when the Conservative Opposition was already describing that level as a 'crisis level' (naturally Mr. Butler is anxious to insist that there is 'no crisis' now, while Mr. Gaitskell has inherited the role of painting the picture black).

Choice of Two Paths

Does this deterioration in the British economic situation, which has been sharply accentuated in the most recent months, contradict the improvement in the international political situation? Could it be argued to imply, like the 'peace scares' on the Stock Exchange which used to accompany every hint of relaxation of international tension, that an end of the cold war would deal a body blow to the British economic structure, which during the past period has been increasingly geared to the requirements of the cold war and built on its assumptions? On the contrary. The deterioration set in, since the summer of last year, before the improvement in international relations. The deterioration is the direct consequence of the policies of the cold war. Throughout this decade Britain's special chronic crisis has been bound up with the imperialist and cold war policies. The end of the cold war would open the way for the recovery of Britain along a new path of internal development and international economic and political relations. The leadership which is first able to sense and express these new possibilities will represent the future for Britain.

Danger Signals in Britain

The present worsening economic situation in Britain, which has taken the bloom off the Tory 'prosperity' publicity paraded during

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the election, is in certain special respects more serious than the previous experiences of 1947, 1949 and 1951. First, it follows directly on the heels of a most reckless and unrestrained 'prosperity' 'boom', with soaring profits and dividends, and inflated share values on a scale never before paralleled; the value of shares on the Stock Exchange expanded by some three thousand million pounds during the twelve months preceding Mr. Butler's new economy measures at the end of June. To this extent, while the crisis has first appeared in the sphere of foreign trade and the balance of payments, and in the threats to the stability of sterling, the indications are closer this time to the traditional type of business cycle, where the height of the boom, with universal acclamation of 'prosperity', and even a slight upward movement in real wages, has always immediately preceded the crash.

Unfavourable Factors

Second, this deterioration takes place after all the advantages of the windfall obtained by the Tory Government through the three years of a favourable turn in the terms of trade have been exhausted, without the opportunity having been used to attempt any basic change in Britain's economic position. The advantages of the windfall during these years have been used, not to facilitate the transition in the process of tackling the causes of Britain's chronic deficit, but to conceal the deficit behind a loudly proclaimed show of a 'solution' (like the similar claim of the Labour Government to have found the 'solution' in 1950), whose hollowness has since been exposed, in the same way as the Labour Government's claim was exposed, by the sequel.

Weakening Competitive Position

The third special factor affecting the present deterioration in Britain's economic position, and the factor which holds out ominous indications for the immediate future, if present policies are continued, is the weakening of Britain's relative position in contrast with its principal capitalist competitors, West Germany, the United States and Japan. The fact that West German production of steel for the first time exceeded that of Britain during the second quarter of this year can be partially attributed to special temporary factors, though not the general tendency of direction which showed itself in West Germany, drawing almost level by the first quarter. But if we take the measure of the world export of capital goods during the

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three years 1952 to 1954, West Germany advanced by 28.9 per cent., the United States by 0.6 per cent., while Britain declined by 2.3 per cent. (analysis by the British Engineering Association, issued in July, 1955). The greater instability of Britain's position during these years has been shown in the movement of the price level, with its reflection in the instability of the pound. All the countries of capitalism have suffered from continuous inflation during these years. But inflation in Britain has been worst. Between 1949 and 1954 the index of retail prices in the United States and West Germany has risen by 10 per cent., but in Britain by 30 per cent. 'Though each of the three countries felt the impact of the economic disturbances of 1949 and 1950, Britain's two main competitors have since found the means to give the currency a stable value; Britain, under either party, has not' (*Economist*, July 23, 1955).

Contrast of Socialism

If the comparison were extended to the world of socialism and socialist construction, then, of course, the contrast would be overwhelming. In the Soviet Union the completion of the Five Year Plan in four and one-third years by May, 1955, has shown an increase in industrial output of 70 per cent. over 1950, or an annual average of 13 per cent., as against an increase of 22 per cent. for Britain during the same period (1950 to May, 1955), or an annual average of 4.1 per cent. Coal production in the Soviet Union increased from 260 million tons in 1950 to 390 million tons, or 50 per cent., as against an increase in Britain from 216 million tons in 1950 to 224 million in 1954, or under 4 per cent. Steel production in the Soviet Union increased from 27 million tons to 45 million, or by two-thirds in four and a quarter years, as against an increase in Britain from 16.3 million tons in 1950 to 18.5 million in 1954, or by under one-seventh. Electricity production in the Soviet Union increased from 90 billion kilowatt hours to 166 billion, or by over five-sixths, as against an increase in Britain from 50.6 billion in 1950 to 68.5 billion in 1954, or by just over one-third. Even if we take the example of the United States, over the quarter century 1929-1954, the average annual increase of industrial production has been 12 per cent. in the Soviet Union, as against 3 per cent. in the United States.

Music of the Future

All this reflects the characteristic contrast of capitalism and socialism—a contrast whose sharpness develops at an accelerating

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pace during the present period. The practical demonstration of the contrast in the tempo and capacity of development between the older and the modern economic system has long been established. Corresponding miracles of advance will also be possible and will be achieved in Britain, as soon as the political power of the working class is strong enough to take the wealth and resources and means of production from the hands of the private monopolists (or their subordinate and associated state representatives in the present limited form of nationalisation, still subservient to the interests of the private monopolists) and build socialism. The material conditions for the transition to socialism have been ripe and more than ripe in Britain for the past three-quarters of a century; and, indeed, the failure so far to make the transition (the failure which is reflected in the policies of reformism) is responsible for all the deepening evils of the present phase. But the indispensable subjective conditions for the transition to socialism—the advance of the working-class movement from the present acceptance of capitalism to the stage of a powerful Communist Party leading a united working-class movement and the majority of the people for the conquest of political power and the building of socialism—are still in process of development. Hence the question of socialism in Britain is still at the stage of propaganda for socialism. We are still compelled to give attention to the diseased condition of British capitalism, and to the consequent problems arising for the struggle of the working class and of the majority of the people.

Why This Crisis?

Why has the present sharp downwards turn taken place in the economic situation of capitalist Britain, reflected in the rise in the trade gap and the deficit in the balance of payments, resulting in instability of sterling, rumours of depreciation of the pound, and foreign short-term capital withdrawals, and giving rise to the successive emergency measures of Mr. Butler in February and in June? There is no lack of 'explanations' churned out for popular consumption, which seek to turn an accusing finger, on behalf of the parasitic elements in British economy, against the productive working class and the poor as the criminals of the piece. Most of this farrago of arrogant nonsense, which is offered for obviously partisan reasons in order to press forward the customary reactionary measures against the working class and working-class standards, is scarcely worth a serious rebuttal.

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The Great Strike Myth

Thus 'strikes' are presented as the grand cause of all the trouble. A moment's examination of the facts will show that this 'explanation' won't wash; and even Mr. Butler is careful to hint at it rather than to risk asserting it directly. No doubt the trade figures in May and June were affected by the dock strike, and to a lesser extent by the rail strike. But the trouble did not begin in May and June. The second half of 1954 already showed a deficit in the balance of payments, as against the surplus in the first half. Mr. Butler raised the Bank Rate to 4½ per cent. in February of this year, before there was any question of the dock strike. The trade gap for the first four months of 1955 from January to April already showed a steep increase to an imports surplus of £295 million, as against £170 million for the first four months of last year, or an increase of 73 per cent. And for the total loss of time through strikes in the economy as a whole it is worth recalling two simple facts brought out in an analysis in the July-August issue of *Industrial Welfare and Personnel Management*, the journal of the Industrial Welfare Society. First, that the loss of time through strikes during the five years 1950-1954 was nineteen times as great in the United States as in Britain, and more than six times as great for every worker, and even for the year 1954, when the British very low figure had risen a little, three and a half times as great. Second, that the total loss of time through strikes last year in Britain was equivalent to about one hour per worker for the entire year, or one-eighth of a bank holiday.

The 'Wage-Price Spiral' Rope Trick

The parallel favourite to blaming strikes as the cause of the difficulties is to blame the 'high wages' and earnings of the workers. The successive rounds of wage demands and wage increases every year, it is argued, lead to successive price increases. The consequent increase in production costs leads to British export goods being priced out of the market. High wages and earnings lead to excessive imports for consumption. Hence Britain is in the red. The country is caught in an 'inflationary wage-price spiral'. From this analysis the conclusion is drawn that wages must come down, or, at any rate, that further wage increases must be checked and wage demands restrained. Back to the wage-freeze. The trick in this analysis is that the facts are turned exactly upside down. There is no doubt that Britain is suffering from a most dangerous infla-

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tionary situation, which is steadily robbing all those with lower incomes, both working class and middle class, for the benefit of the big monopolists and Stock Exchange speculators. But the causes of this inflation do not lie in the wage-level. The causes of this inflation can be very clearly discerned in the existing economic structure and policies, and especially in the rearmament and cold war policies, and in the speculative profiteering on the basis of this programme. The wage demands are not the starting point of the inflation, but its reflection. It is not prices that are panting after wages. It is wages that are panting after prices.

Wages Chasing Prices

Between the summer of 1947 and October, 1951, when the Tory Government took office, that is, during the last four years of the Labour Government and the period of partial operation of the wage freeze, adult male wage rates rose by 20 per cent., while the index of retail prices rose by 29 per cent. Thus real wage rates fell. Only during the recent period, under the Tory Government, when the trade unions officially threw off the wage-freeze and the more militant unions entered into action, has this loss been barely made good, so that adult male wage rates have reached 51 per cent. over 1947, as against 50 per cent. for prices. The official return for earnings (based in fact on a minority of those employed) is often substituted for wage rates in these calculations in order to show a more favourable picture. Such a substitution is misleading, not only because it ignores the increased hours worked to obtain these earnings (longer hours than pre-war), but because overtime earnings during a boom disappear if the boom falls off, so that wage rates are the only stable guide.

Ratio of Earnings

The higher level of earnings above wage rates reflects increased output, so that the apparently higher earnings represent in reality a lower proportion of the total product, or heavier exploitation. Thus even the calculations of Professor Pigou in *The Times* of July 14 reached the conclusion that aggregate wage earnings fell from 40.5 per cent. of the gross national product in 1948 to 39 per cent. in 1953, and during the ensuing year, following the more militant action of the unions, rose only to 39.6 per cent. Hence, even on the basis of this semi-official calculation, *the proportion of the national product received by the workers in aggregate earnings fell between 1948 and 1954.* On the other hand, as the Chairman of

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the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, Mr. Brotherton, pointed out at the August conference, justifying the demand for a 'substantial' increase in wages, shareholding in engineering companies, worth £100 in 1949, had risen on an average to £245, and in shipbuilding to £280. It is obvious that the inflation during these recent years has not taken place in the sphere of wages. It has taken place in the sphere of profits and share values. And this inflation has directly followed from governmental policy, bound up with the whole spendthrift and reckless rearmament, imperialist commitments, colonial wars and the cold war.

Mr. Butler's 'Explanation'

Mr. Butler, in offering his explanation for the critical situation, after all the previous talk of prosperity, when he brought in his emergency measures in July, sought to argue that there was 'no crisis', but 'only'—inflation:

> It would be wrong to regard the present position as a crisis at all. There was a certain degree of inflation when it was necessary to reduce home demand, to get more into exports.

His picture of 'inflation', however, was a generalised picture of the people as a whole ('we') consuming too much, importing too much and failing to export enough:

> We are at present absorbing too much of our production at home. Our success in increasing production and our very prosperity require increased imports which, in turn, must be paid for by increased exports. Sufficient extra exports, however, are not yet forthcoming. The strikes have undoubtedly set our export trade back considerably. . . . Generally, we cannot be satisfied with the way in which our balance of payments and our reserves are moving.

From this follows the familiar recipe which has been repeated with sickening iteration through all these years of cold war and rearmament and recurring crises in the balance of payments:

> Our primary aim must be to reduce home demand in order to leave room for the extra exports we need.

He was too tactful to make any reference to the three thousand million pounds expansion in share values during the preceding twelve months.

Whose High Consumption?

The falsity of the picture of high consumption and spending by the masses of the people as the supposed key to Britain's present

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economic difficulties has already been indicated by the hard facts on wages and earnings, that the proportion of earnings received by the workers from the national product has fallen between 1948 and 1954. The higher production, with an increase of 40 per cent. since 1948, has not gone to provide higher consumption for the masses of the people. According to the O.E.E.C. Report 'Statistics of National Product and Expenditure, 1938, 1947 and 1952', published last year, the proportion of private consumption from the gross national product in Britain has fallen from 77 per cent. in 1938 to 75 per cent. in 1947 and 68 per cent. in 1952, while private consumption per head in 1952, at constant prices, was only just at the level of 1938, despite all the increase in output and supposed advance above the level of the hungry thirties. Food consumption per head in 1954 of meat, fish, butter, fruit and vegetables was below the level of 1934-38 (*Economist*, April 2, 1955).

'Welfare State Extravagance'

If the picture is presented of costly social services, the 'highest social service system in the world', etc. ('new standards of social security . . . no other major industrial country has gone nearly as far along that road', *Observer*, August 14, 1955), as the supposed special burden on Britain's expenditure, the facts again belie the myth. Even if we leave out of account the much higher proportionate expenditure on social services in the socialist countries, even in the capitalist world the recent report of the International Labour Office has shown that, expressed in U.S. dollars at the official rate of exchange, social service benefits per head in 1951 amounted to $96 in France, $89 in Belgium, $83 in Sweden, and $78 in West Germany, as against $70 in the United Kingdom. If we compare pre-war and now, a reverse picture of relative expenditure on social services and on armaments is revealed. In 1935 social services expenditure of £260 million was nearly double the military expenditure of £135 million. This year's social service expenditure of £1,315 million is four-fifths the military expenditure of £1,668 million (in reality, including U.S. military aid, £1,753 million). Thus, while social services expenditure has increased just over fivefold, military expenditure has increased thirteen times. Between 1950 and 1955 the proportion of social services expenditure has fallen from 38 per cent. of the budget to 29 per cent., while the proportion of military expenditure has risen from 23 per cent. to 35 per cent. It is not difficult to see where the 'extravagance' has lain.

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The Real Drain on Britain's Resources

Mr. Butler knows very well where the weight of expenditure has fallen, what factors have caused the increase in the trade gap, and why Britain's economy is consequently unstable and repeatedly in the red. He knows very well that the decisive issue is not the volume of mass spending or the cost of the social services, however much he may like to hint at this as the burden with a view to securing contraction in this sphere for the benefit of the other spheres whose interests he has primarily to serve. For Mr. Butler has himself admitted in his speech at Sydney in January of last year (but never in his speeches in Britain) that 'but for the burden of the defence effort the balance of payments position could be improved by between £350 and £400 million annually', *i.e.*, that the rearmament programme and overseas military expenditure represents £350 to £400 million on the debit side in the balance of payments, or close on one-sixth of the value of Britain's exports in the year to which he referred (1953). It is not only a question of the direct overseas military expenditure, recorded at £147 million for 1954, although all this (imperialist military commitments and colonial wars) has to be paid for by unrequited exports from the output of British industry. It is worth noting that the overseas military expenditure for the second half of 1954 was more than six times the deficit on the balance of payments for that half year.

Waste Imports and Unrequited Exports

Mr. Butler's picture of 'prosperity' giving rise to 'increased imports' and therefore making necessary 'increased exports' is a caricature of the real present position on imports and exports. He ignores the proportion of these imports that are required as raw materials for the war industries, that is, not for consumption, nor for productive purposes to raise standards, but for purposes of destruction. These are wasted imports from the point of view of the standard of living or useful production but they have to be paid for by exports of goods which could have either been used at home to raise the standard of living or could have been exchanged abroad in return for goods to raise standards at home. To this must be added the withdrawal from production of one in eleven of the working population for the purposes of the armed forces or supply of the armed forces—the highest proportion and heaviest military burden of any major country in the world, as the United Nations statistics have shown.

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Additional Debit Items

All this, however, only takes into account the direct cost of the war programme. To this must be added the cost of the cold war programme, expressed in the strategic trade bans, whose heavy cost Mr. Butler admitted (again for foreign consumption only) when he stated to his American masters that 'we could only dispense with iron curtain supplies at a serious cost to our general economy and the food supplies of our people' (interview to *United States News and World Report*, January 13, 1953). Still further concealed from public view in the propagandist picture of 'imports for consumption' and the necessity for 'increased exports to pay for them' is the heavy volume of export of capital, even during the years of deficits in the balance of payments, to maintain and expand the overseas capital accumulation of the financial oligarchy in the countries of the direct and indirect empire. Thus in 1954 the net export of capital to the 'rest of the sterling area' amounted to £268 million. In the same year the colonial sterling balances, representing in effect forced loans from the subject colonial peoples to Britain, increased by £124 million, or nearly half the value of the export of capital to the 'rest of the sterling area'. When all these factors are taken into account, a very different picture emerges of the real imperialist economy of Britain, and the reasons for its instability.

Ten Years of the Road to Ruin

If we examine the entire record of the past decade since the war, we shall see that the essential governing directive of policy, alike under Labour and Conservative Governments, has been to maintain this imperialist economy, at increasingly heavy cost to the British people and to the colonial peoples. During the nine years 1946 to 1954 the net deficit on the balance of payments has been £176 million. But the total government overseas expenditure has been £2,023 million, or nearly twelve times the deficit. The total overseas military expenditure has been £1,461 million, or more than eight times the deficit. In addition the net export of capital overseas has been £899 million, and to the 'rest of the sterling area' (that is, mainly to the empire) has been £1,575 million.* How have these gigantic overseas disbursements, totalling close on £3,000 million, been possible on a net deficit of £176 million? This has been the precarious balancing trick of the weakened British imperialists since

*These figures are illustrative only; many further facts would need to be taken into account for a more adequate analysis, including the depreciation of the pound and changes in prices which make the figures of differing years not strictly comparable.

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the war. A considerable portion was covered by the successive forms of dollar aid, totalling over £2,000 million, which thus in practice went, not to raise standards in Britain, but to maintain the imperialist interests of the British financial oligarchy, at the cost of selling out the British people to a heavy degree of dependence on the United States. £940 million has been extracted from the colonial peoples by the increase in the colonial sterling balances between the end of 1945 and the end of 1954. From the British people heavy increased output has been extracted without their receiving any corresponding return in improved standards of living. Such has been the real balance sheet of British imperialism since the war. The entire concentration has been directed to rebuild the imperialist economy in place of tackling the essential tasks of reconstructing the economy of Britain on a healthy and independent basis. The cost of this policy has been expressed in the cold war, colonial wars, rearmament and dependence on the United States. It is this fatal policy which it is now necessary to reverse and replace by a constructive policy in the interests of the British people, no less than of the colonial peoples.

A Rearmament Boom

The loudly proclaimed triumph of 'prosperity' and boom conditions during the recent period, with its reckless speculation and inflated profits, and heavy pressure on the standards of the people, has been built on shaky foundations. There has been a small (relatively to socialist countries, a very small) net increase in production. But if that increase is analysed, it will be found to have taken place mainly in the industries most closely connected with war production, in aircraft, engineering, shipbuilding, motor vehicles and steel. Between 1950 and 1953 the proportion of the gross output of the metal using industries going directly to armaments rose from 6 per cent. to 13.5 per cent. The situation in the basic industries essential for constructive advance, in coal or in transport, or in the consumption industries, as in textiles, shows a far less favourable picture. The nationalised industries, covering coal, power and transport, in place of being seen as the vital sector for development and modernisation, from the derelict condition in which they were taken over, as the foundation for constructive development and productive advance of the whole economy, have been treated as the milch-cow for the private profit-making sector, not only to extract extortionate direct profit for the old inflated capital, but with spurious deficits to cover the real profits made at

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their expense by the private sector; and the application of cuts has always first been operated to reduce or delay their constructive programmes of development. Thus the boom conditions of the recent period have by no reason reflected a 'healthy' (even in the traditional capitalist sense) economic situation. The boom conditions have been closely tied up with the rearmament programme, and with the inflated public spending for the rearmament programme; and the riot of speculation and fantastic profits has soared upon this basis.

A Distorted Economy

To this extent there has been a measure of the type of unhealthy situation of a partial war economy or cold war economy. The ancient fallacy, or short-sighted view, that rearmament and war mean prosperity, plenty of jobs, full employment, the cure for unemployment and the alternative to depressions, has been reinforced by the reformist peddling of the vulgarised Keynesian illusions that public spending and credit manipulation can cure the contradictions of capitalism. Hence the fears of wide sections of the workers that, if the rearmament boom stops, unemployment will follow; and the open calculations of influential capitalist sections that a spell of unemployment will be beneficial to check the wage demands and curb the militancy of the workers. But, as Stalin long ago pointed out, a war economy is a distorted economy. Beneath the loudly proclaimed parade of full employment, an increasing distortion of the economy takes place. Production is turned to unproductive purposes, while cuts are imposed on the vital constructive sectors. State expenditure, taxation and the national debt rise. Increasing burdens are placed on the people. The price is seen in the steadily mounting inflation, which cuts into the standards of all the workers and the entire middle class, eats away all small savings, and impoverishes the mass of the people for the benefit of the tiny minority of big monopolists and speculators. Such is the state of Britain under Butler. The further price is seen in the steeply intensified exploitation of the colonial peoples. And the outcome is seen when the weakened economy of the imperialist metropolis, despite the increased parasitic tribute from overseas, is no longer able to maintain even this precarious equilibrium, and the deficit reappears on the balance of payments. The response is at once to turn to the old bankrupt remedies of cuts and restrictions on the people, and reductions or slowing down on the indispensable programme for constructive development.

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Towards an Economy for Peace

The new turn in the international situation represented by the Geneva meeting, with the possibility and hope of an ending of the cold war if the universal pressure of the peoples for peace which has won this first initial stage is maintained and intensified, offers at the same time the signal for a corresponding turn in economic policy in Britain. Away from the cold war and rearmament towards a policy of constructive economic development at home, with especial attention to the advance of the nationalised industries, extension of nationalisation, building of the needed homes, schools and hospitals, and orientation of the production drive towards raising the standards of the people. Away from the strategic trade bans and dollar dependence towards trade with all the world, including the fullest utilisation of the possibilities for large-scale long-term contracts of mutual benefit with the countries of the socialist world. Away from the colonial wars and colonial exploitation to a new relationship with the present colonial peoples, on the basis of their full national independence and equal exchange of goods for common advantage in the tasks of reconstruction. Such a programme can only be carried out by the democratic forces of the people with the organised working class in the leadership. The concrete details of such a programme need the widest discussion in order to meet the new conditions which are now developing. The time is ripe for a great debate to be launched throughout the labour movement on the new economic and political orientation for Britain which corresponds to the objective of peaceful co-existence. For there is no doubt that it is the broad aims of such a policy which, in the present turning point of the international situation, no less than in the present critical economic situation in Britain, need to inspire the fight of all progressive delegates at the coming Trades Union Congress and Labour Party Conference.

August 15, 1955. R.P.D.

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FORWARD FROM GENEVA

QUÆSTOR

1. *Background*

THE Geneva meeting of Heads of Government this year was like one of those flashpoints in the affairs of Nature and man when opposite tendencies, slowly accumulating over a long period, suddenly reach the decisive moment. The resultant flash leaves nothing quite what it was before: it represents the starting-point in a new phase of development. Geneva was a historic 'leap' in the evolution of international relations—in which the opposing forces working for peace and for war still exist, but with the balance of strength between them altered, definitely for the better.

Consider what had gone on in the years and months before Geneva. In 1953, beginning already before Stalin's death, the long series of Soviet efforts to create a better international atmosphere—met largely (as chronicled in these columns) with jeers and sneers about 'the new look' and arrogant demands for 'deeds not words': evidently due to the belief that the Soviet Union was weakening. The Soviet Government had to remind the warmongers that this was not so, by announcing its H-bomb tests (August 20, 1953) and new atom-bomb tests (September 18, 1953).

Then 1954, a half-way house. In January-February, the Berlin Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Big Four: deadlock on Germany, but agreement to meet at Geneva on Far Eastern questions. In April-July, their meeting at Geneva: deadlock on Korea, but agreement on peace in Indo-China, an immense encouragement to the mass of the people in every country who were loudly demanding it. Immediate counter-measures by the enemies of peace in Washington and London: the conclusion of the South-East Asia Treaty in September, to keep alive the threat of war on China (with the Labour Party leaders opposing repudiation of S.E.A.T.O. at the Scarborough Conference in October); and then the concerted drive for German rearmament, riding roughshod over the protests of the majority of the British and French peoples—the Paris treaties, the first of their kind in modern history to be endorsed by *minorities* in the national parliaments—and of the entire German working-class, west and east.

But mark the sequel in 1955. On the one hand, the Soviet Union proclaimed quite plainly that the Western powers had 'increased the threat of another war' (Marshal Voroshilov on January 1) and were

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'greatly increasing international tension and the threat to the security of the nations' (Supreme Soviet declaration on February 9). It informed them that 'the Soviet people have made such progress in the manufacture of hydrogen bombs that it is the United States that is lagging behind, and not the Soviet Union' (Foreign Minister Molotov on February 8). It increased its defence expenditure for 1955 from 18 per cent. to 20 per cent. of the total Budget. After repeated warnings, it cancelled its wartime treaties of friendship and alliance with Great Britain and France (May 7), as flagrantly violated by the rearming of German militarism. On May 14, it signed the Warsaw Treaty with the European People's Democracies, providing for co-ordinated defence measures, including a single command.

This series of measures was the reply to the 'positions of strength' policy practised by the U.S.A. and its satellite governments, reminding them that the policy is dangerous and essentially stupid. But at the same time the Soviet Government showed that it was fully aware of the boomerang effect which the vicious insistence on German rearmament and the growing awareness of the H-bomb peril were having on the nations of Europe and indeed thoughout the world. It put forth all the immense resources of diplomacy—in the hands of a working-class State—to take advantage of this situation in a way which would create barriers to war and reinforce the great world-wide demand for peace.

The Austrians, the Yugoslavs, the West Germans themselves were starting up in horror at the ghastly spectre of reviving German militarism, unabashed and even encouraged in its revengeful claims by its U.S.A. patrons? They were given the chance to step out of its orbit—by the Soviet-Austrian agreement of April 15, by the Soviet-Yugoslav agreement of June 2, by the Soviet Note on June 7 inviting Adenauer to Moscow. The peoples of the world were anxious for some measure of disarmament which would carry further these new prospects of relaxed tension, and would relieve them of the fear of the terrible new weapons of mass destruction? The Soviet Union responded in its new disarmament proposals of May 10, based on acceptance of the Western Powers' own terms for maximum land forces, on a workable system of international inspection (at key points in its first stage) and on reciprocal pledges about the use, and ultimate abolition, of atomic weapons. The Asian and African nations at the Bandung Conference had proclaimed their abhorrence of the prospect of a third world war, and their demand for peaceful co-existence of the peoples (April 24)? The Soviet Govern-

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ment responded—not only by a declaration of support, but by an invitation to the Indian Prime Minister which led to his historic fortnight's triumphal progress through the U.S.S.R., and the joint Bulganin-Nehru statement (June 22): a statement which spoke the will of one quarter of the world's population to 'a climate of peace'.

Thus the worsening of international relations consciously willed by one group of imperialist governments *against* the wishes of their people in 1954, was being turned in 1955 into a step-by-step bettering of international relations by the determination of the Socialist Great Power and its allies, *supported* by the wishes of the peoples (revealed eloquently by the great World Peace Assembly at Helsinki on June 22-30)—and of a large number of the non-socialist governments. It was in this situation, as noted in the June *Labour Monthly*, that Sir Anthony Eden skilfully opened his election campaign by turning over completely from opposition to starting with a Great Power meeting 'at the summit' to support of it. It was in this situation that, very unwillingly, the United States government followed suit—'to help the Conservatives win the election'.

It was in this situation that the four Heads of Government met at Geneva on July 18, 1955.

2. *What Happened at Geneva*

There was no agenda fixed beforehand. All the statesmen, on alighting from their planes, had declared their desire to discuss major international problems in a friendly way—'to create an atmosphere of confidence in the relations between States', were the words used by Bulganin. They recognised that they were under compulsion to do so. Eisenhower admitted: 'We are here in response to a universal urge, recognised by Premier Bulganin in his speech of July 15, that the political leaders of our great countries find a path to peace.' The peoples of the world hoped that the Conference would put an end to the cold war, said the French Premier Faure: 'We have the duty not to disappoint them.'

This sense of obligation to the peoples of the world dominated the Conference from beginning to end, all eye witnesses agree. It was powerfully expressed in the address of the President of Switzerland at the official dinner to the Heads of Governments on July 21, when he spoke of the ardent hope of all mankind, 'across the nations' frontiers', that the Conference would be a turning point, 'an end and a beginning—an end of heavy uncertainty, a beginning of the time when peoples and their governments, surmounting their differences, will associate their efforts in a common struggle for peace and

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human welfare'. The feeling even dominated the usually detached and cynical pressmen, of whom there were over a thousand. Old 'League of Nations hands', and junior reporters freshly promoted from the police court round, alike admitted to this feeling of deep-down optimism, that 'they can't let it fail'. It may be noted that among the British press, the *Daily Telegraph*, which 'broke the back' of the Conference on the second day and 'broke' it again on the very day that agreement was announced: and the *Daily Herald* which announced deadlock repeatedly and prophesied a few platitudes as the outcome, were isolated among their contemporaries during the Conference and somewhat ridiculous at its end.

The opening speeches of the four Heads of Governments on July 18 were calculated to maintain this spirit. True, Eisenhower duly raised the 'problems' of 'certain peoples of Eastern Europe' and 'international Communism', dictated by the American diehards, which at other times would have wrecked the Conference as they no doubt hoped. But no one was more delighted than the Americans when Bulganin replied quietly that such questions were out of place at this Conference. His reminder of the much more serious questions—the lawful rights of the Chinese People's Republic in the United Nations, and of its desire to settle the question of Taiwan (Formosa) by direct talks with the U.S.A.—provoked no controversy, although it was known that at their preliminary meeting in Paris the British and American delegations had agreed not to discuss Far Eastern questions at Geneva. At the press conferences which followed (the Americans circulated verbatim reports of these, while the substance of the Soviet press conferences was published by *Soviet News*) it was equally noticeable that the utmost emphasis was laid on the reasonable and friendly tone of the proceedings: and this continued thoughout the Conference.

In the opening speeches, moreover, it had become clear very quickly that there were four questions all were prepared to discuss—Germany, European security, disarmament and improved east-west contacts. These four points, in that order, were agreed the next morning by a meeting of the four Foreign Ministers, as the agenda for the week; and the speed with which this agreement was reached was generally taken as a further proof that both sides meant business. The idea was to have a general discussion on each point at one afternoon's session of the Heads of Government—thus taking up four days (July 19-22)—and more detailed directives, following that discussion, to be worked out by the Foreign Ministers at morning

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meetings. These would be adopted by the Heads of Government on the last day (July 23), and would be the basis of work for a meeting of Foreign Ministers, also at Geneva in October.

What transpired from these discussions, as recorded in the press conferences, the published statements of the Heads of Government, the latter's subsequent reports to their respective Parliaments and the mass of press messages published during the Conference?

On European security, the Soviet Union proposed the conclusion of a general fifty years' treaty in which all European countries irrespective of their social system (including both parts of Germany so long as there was no united Germany) could take part, together with the U.S.A. They would abstain from mutual attacks, or the use of force in international relations: they would undertake to settle disputes between them peacefully in accordance with the U.N.O. Charter, and would consult if the threat of armed aggression in Europe arose: if it took place, they would support the victim by every means, including armed force: they would set up political and military consultative bodies, in which People's China would have an observer. During an initial period of two or three years, existing treaties (N.A.T.O., the West European Union and the Warsaw Treaty of March 14, 1955) would remain in force. But already all States involved in them would (i) undertake to abstain from using armed force and to settle disputes peacefully (ii) consult if such disputes arose between them (iii) agree not to increase their armed forces in the territory of other European States. Furthermore, the States taking part in the three Treaties mentioned would sign a separate provisional treaty embodying these points.

On their part, the three western ministers backed a proposal which Eden had already made in his opening speech on July 18, for a five-power security pact—Britain, France, U.S.A., U.S.S.R. and a united Germany—providing for mutual assistance against aggression, agreement on maximum forces and armaments (under a system of reciprocal inspection), and 'a dimilitarised area between east and west'. In the course of discussion, Eden argued that it would take too long to start with an all-European organisation: but agreed that the number of States taking part in his scheme might be enlarged to as many as 10 or 12. Bulganin in reply said that the Soviet proposal did not necessarily mean that all European States at once should be members, and there would 'probably be a certain sequence in this respect'. But he made it clear that (as he said in his opening speech) it was essential to 'improve the entire situation

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in Europe and create normal conditions of life for the European nations'.

Thus on the numbers of States participating, and on the general working of a security pact, there was obvious ground for agreement. But the essential difference between the two schemes was that Eden's made a prior condition of the unification of Germany—and a Germany forming part of N.A.T.O. and the West European Union, that is a Germany rearming under the Paris treaties—whereas Bulganin's aimed at creating a general climate of security in Europe first. In this the two parts of Germany could share, each taking part in their own grouping of States but extending contacts with each other, until the greater security in Europe had led to such measures of general disarmament (including the two Germanies) as would remove the menace of revived German aggression. In other words, the Western Powers insisted on rearming Germany as a priority, and were prepared to sacrifice not only German unity to this but a general system of European security as well: whereas the Soviet Union (which had for years offered German unity by free elections if there were no German rearmament) said that, in the new circumstances created by the Paris treaties, European security must come first, and German unity be reached 'step-by-step'.

It must be mentioned that British official opinion had been noticeably inclining this way, for some time before Geneva, and this view had been expressed in several *Times* leading articles, as well as in speeches by Macmillan (July 6) and Eden (July 7). But Dr. Adenauer (for obvious reasons) protested strongly to the Americans; and at a meeting in Paris on July 15 the latter had prevailed on the British Premier to change his ground. Nevertheless, everyone noticed at Geneva that the French Premier himself had admitted the possibility of an alternative—that a united Germany might leave West European Union. And those present at Geneva state that privately no British or American pressman could deny that there was no chance of the German Democratic Republic (East Germany), with its economic and social system moving towards Socialism, voluntarily fusing with the German Federal Republic (West Germany), with its economy based on monopoly capitalism, so long as the latter was rearming, under Nazi generals and as part of two hostile anti-Soviet alliances, N.A.T.O. and W.E.U.

The discussion on these questions occupied not only the Heads of Government on the afternoon of July 19, but the Foreign Ministers on the mornings of July 20 and 21 and nearly all day on July 22. It resolved itself ultimately into the simple problem of

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whether European security and German unity—two questions obviously connected very closely—could in fact be discussed separately at the October meeting of Foreign Ministers. Needless to say, in the course of these closely-argued discussions a great number of points were made, and much light thrown on obscure aspects, which will be of value in October. The debate was continued on Saturday, July 23, at a 'restricted meeting'—the four Heads, the four Foreign Ministers and a bare minimum of other personnel—and at about 4 p.m. it was announced that complete agreement had been reached. Eyewitnesses say that the change of mood among the hundreds of journalists assembled in the *Maison de la Presse,* waiting for the result—from intense gloom to joyful relief—was itself one of the revealing incidents of the Conference!

In the upshot, the directives to the Foreign Ministers, while associating the two questions under one heading, left no doubt as to which was decisive. For the purpose of establishing European security, the Ministers are instructed to consider various proposals including those made at the Conference: but it is not specified that German unity must be a condition. For the settlement of the German question and the reunification of Germany by means of free elections, it is laid down that they 'shall be carried out in conformity with the national interests of the German people and the interests of European security'. Thus the way is left open for negotiation—including Adenauer's direct negotiations with the Soviet Government—and reasonable compromise.

On the third question of the agenda—disarmament—a number of proposals had been made. Bulganin pointed out how close, by the Soviet proposals of May 10, the positions of all concerned had come together on (i) 'ceilings' for the armed forces of the Five Great Powers (ii) prohibition of atomic and hydrogen weapons by stages, after arms and forces have been cut by 75 per cent. of the agreed quotas (iii) methods of effective international control over reduction of armed forces and outlawing of atomic weapons. He suggested that these points of agreement, if embodied in a declaration, would be a valuable lead to the world: and with it should go a pledge of the Great Powers not to use atomic and hydrogen weapons, pending their complete prohibition.

Eden paid tribute to the Soviet proposals of May 10, adding one of his own—that there should be established joint inspecting teams, 'in specified areas of agreed extent on either side of the line dividing Eastern and Western Europe', to provide a practical if limited test of international inspection of forces in being. The French Premier

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submitted a memorandum on a system of budgetary cuts in arms expenditure. Eisenhower, on his part, while insisting that the United Nations Sub-Committee on Disarmament should 'give priority effort to the study of inspection and reporting', produced his own proposal to the U.S.S.R. (i) to give each other a complete blue print of all military establishments in their respective countries (ii) to provide facilities to each other for complete aerial photo reconnaissance.

It must be stated that, according to all present at the Conference, this proposal was taken much less seriously on all sides than the great 'boost' in the British and American press would warrant. For one thing, as the Americans did not trouble to conceal, it was put into the President's speech as a 'smart move' by the department dealing with psychological warfare. Furthermore, (i) how could you photograph underground airfields, factories, bombstores (ii) why were the 800-odd U.S.A. bases in Europe and Asia—much more of a potential peril to the U.S.S.R. than those in the U.S.A.—excluded (iii) how was it that Eden and Faure, warmly applauding the proposal, made no offer to include *their* installations and territories in the scheme? One thing was obvious, whether it was designed or not: that to open a debate on it might easily dissipate the atmosphere of good will, and wreck the Conference. Bulganin proposed that the Foreign Ministers should consider *all* the proposals made, and make recommendations to the United Nations Disarmament Sub-Committee accordingly.

This was done. The directive on this point proclaimed 'the necessity, for secure peace and for the welfare of mankind, of achieving a system for the control and reduction of all armaments and armed forces under effective safeguards'. The four Heads agreed 'for these purposes to work together to develop an acceptable system of disarmament'. Their representatives in the U.N. Sub-Committee were to take account in their work of the various proposals made at the Conference. The Sub-Committee was to meet on August 29, thus leaving plenty of time before the Foreign Ministers meet in October.

The subject of east-west contacts did not get all the attention it deserved, owing to pressure on the time of the Conference. Only Eisenhower and Faure actually delivered their speeches on Friday, July 22: Eden's was circulated: only a summary of Bulganin's intended remarks was published in the Soviet Press. But all were agreed on the need for (i) more technical and cultural contacts (ii) more trade and less restrictions on it (iii) more tourist and journalistic traffic.

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SCOTS MINER

From "A History of the Scottish Miners

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by R. T. F. Turner

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The directive instructed the Foreign Ministers, by means of experts, to study measures for eliminating barriers to trade and promoting freer contacts, 'including those possible in organs and agencies of the United Nations' (the Economic Commission for Europe had been instanced several times in the discussion, as a body where east-west co-operation had already made some progress, even during the cold war).

The Conference ended on the evening of the 23rd. Eisenhower began his closing speech with the words 'This has been an historic meeting'. The Conference had 'more than accomplished' the limited task it set itself, said Eden. The important decisions adopted 'are the beginning of a new stage in the relations between our countries', said Bulganin. 'We believe that the Geneva Conference has historic significance. . . . The Geneva Conference has laid the foundation for the establishment of confidence among States, irrespective of their political and social systems, on the basis of peaceful co-existence', said Khrushchov at a public meeting in Berlin on July 26.

3. *Since Geneva*

A number of important events since the end of the Geneva Conference have underlined the truth of these opinions. No one can doubt that a change has come over the international scene.

One has been the first small step towards a new pacification in the Far East—the opening of direct Chinese-American negotiations in Geneva, with the gesture of goodwill made by the Chinese People's Government in releasing the 11 American airmen sentenced for espionage. On the other hand, it is a reminder that there are still powerful forces in the U.S.A. anxious to provoke war in the Far East that, as though by the wave of a magic wand in the Pentagon, the three American puppets in that region have simultaneously begun provocative acts of violence in Chinese waters and in Korea and Vietnam respectively.

There have been the reports by Eden and Bulganin to their respective Parliaments—with the warmly cheered simultaneous announcements of the visit to this country by Bulganin and Khrushchov, next spring—and by Eisenhower by radio to the nation. There has been the invitation to the French Prime Minister and Foreign Minister to visit Moscow in October, also universally welcomed in France and the Soviet Union. But again there has been a reminder of how strong are the forces of illwill, in the splenetic outburst of the Democratic leader Adlai Stevenson against the President for 'pleading with a third-string Communist (Marshal Zhukov) to please

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believe that the U.S.A. wanted peace' (*The Times*, August 12); and in a renewed campaign of illwill and sowing of distrust towards the U.S.S.R., begun in this country by the *Daily Telegraph* and, to some extent by the *Manchester Guardian*.

What has probably impressed the public mind in all countries even more than these, there has been the epoch-making conference on the peaceful uses of atomic energy at Geneva, with its generous exchanges of far-reaching information by American, Soviet and British scientists—an example without precedent in modern times—and its two exhibitions which are already stimulating thought in all countries to further creative effort in this wonderful sphere. It is noteworthy that the journalists as a whole have attempted to play a worthy part here too, in inspiring the public with the spirit of international friendship, rather than the mutual backbiting familiar for the last ten years. Yet it cannot be overlooked that, in this country, there are still possible such exhibitions of spiteful boorishness as the announcement of the Society of British Aircraft Constructors that they are not inviting official representatives 'of Soviet bloc countries' to their exhibition in September: let them 'buy tickets on public days' (*Daily Telegraph*, August 12).

There comes, at the moment of writing, the tremendous announcement by the U.S.S.R. that, in view of the new situation after Geneva, it is cutting its armed forces by 640,000 in the next four months—a reduction of over 20 per cent. This has truly taken the breath away of the western chancelleries. Yet mark the response of the wreckers—the immediate revival of the old fairy stories, exposed in these columns four years ago, about the '4¾ millions' allegedly under arms in the U.S.S.R., in order to counteract the effect of this noble gesture.

There is hard work ahead, and much difficulty to overcome—particularly on the questions of European security and the position of Germany. But so much was done at Geneva that there can be no doubt of the *possibility* of success. What is needed is that the pressure of the people on the Governments—of the opinion of the organised labour movement in particular—should be redoubled: for that is the factor which, in the last analysis, brought so much success at Geneva in July. And for readers of the *Labour Monthly* that means, first and foremost, pressure on the British Government for an agreed settlement on security for all Europe, not trying the impossible task of forcing it into the obnoxious framework of a Germany rearmed in the western alliance: for a big lead from the four Powers on the many points of a disarmament declaration which

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are already in principle agreed: for an immediate end to trade restrictions and 'cold war' propaganda of every kind between the nations.

In that sense, Geneva is not only an achievement—it is a challenge.

MEANS TEST IN HOUSING

THOMAS BALMER

IN localities all over the country severe struggles are taking place between council tenants and their authorities, irrespective of political majority. These conflicts arise from attempts to put into force the Housing Minister's recommendations to local authorities to give favourable consideration to the proposals in the Brooke Report (*Transfers, Exchanges and Rents*) published in 1953.

Among other things this Report discussed Differential Rent schemes, which are schemes for charging different rents according to income. Since then the Tory party has come out officially in favour of such schemes. Local authorities are tending to respond to the idea because over the years their financial position has been getting steadily worse. The rents now being paid by the tenants when added to the Exchequer and rate subsidy are failing to meet the rising interest rates on housing loans and the rising costs of building and management and repairs. Only two alternative ways of meeting this gap are envisaged by local councils. One is by increasing the subsidy from the rates—the other is by increasing the rents of their tenants and shifting to their shoulders responsibility for internal repairs and painting.

Local authorities might have sought relief from their difficulty by a concerted approach to the Government to reduce interest rates and increase inadequate subsidies. Instead they have squeezed their tenants and encouraged local electors to regard these victims of their lack of real policy as ungrateful malcontents luxuriating in ideal conditions at the expense of citizens worse off than themselves. The easy line of raising the rents has, however, reached breaking-point for the very poorest tenants. Hence, local authorities have leapt at the idea of charging rents according to income with grateful zest; tackling the real problem is postponed once more.

The theory of Differential Rents is based on the view that because

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the poorest tenants can ill afford to pay more rent, fellow-tenants who are better off should pay more. This avoids a uniform rent rise applied commonly to all tenants. The theory is justified by reference to the undoubted, and quite natural, fact that Council tenants have varying family incomes (like all tenants everywhere), that some of these incomes must be quite large (a T.V. aerial and a little car are sufficient evidence for this!) and that it cannot be right to allow such tenants to benefit from the State and rate subsidies which ought to be utilised to keep down the rents of less well-off tenants. The subsidy cake of given and unalterable size must be distributed in unequal slices according to need. This requires a Means Test. This theory has, lamentably, been swallowed wholesale by some Labour Councillors who actually go so far as to maintain that rent adjusted by income is 'socialist'—from each according to his means, to each according to his needs. But property owners seeking the £400 state grant per house for modernisation are conveniently excluded from the operation of this theory.

The fact is that the Differential Rent system is no more than a device to effect a rise in rental revenues—a scheme to get more money out of Council tenants as a whole. It clearly involves the principle of one group of tenants subsidising another group, so that responsibility for the poverty of the latter is transferred not to the rich, not to the nation, not even to the general body of ratepayers, but to groups of slightly better paid workers.

The acceptance of the Differential Rents theory is only possible through a mis-representation of the principle and purpose of housing subsidies—and genuine ignorance and misunderstanding on the part of local councillors too indifferent to study the Housing Acts and thereby made victims of Tory propaganda. It is clear from the entire history of housing subsidies and legislation that when land and building costs are at such a level (and involve such rentals) as to keep private enterprise investors out of the field, subsidised housing via the local authority is the only way in which houses can be provided at all in any number.

The Housing Acts require local authorities (1) to provide houses where there is a scarcity not being met by private enterprise programmes; and (2) to charge reasonable rents. Reasonable rents were deemed to be ones taking account of the prevailing rents of working class houses in the locality and this 'yard-stick' gave proper recognition to the fact that council tenants and private landlord's tenants earn, broadly speaking, the same wages. The Housing Acts also recognise that local authorities inevitably incur deficits on this

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social provision of housing and make provision for the Exchequer and the rates to recoup them, *i.e.*, by subsidy.

In the last few years, these simple and correct principles for fixing rents and providing subsidies have been progressively abandoned. The present subsidy of £29 8s. per house per year basic is really the 1946 subsidy, with an addition which only, in fact, partially meets the higher loan interest rates since 1946 and ignores the substantially higher cost of building: the consequential burden of higher loan repayment and interest, and of repairs, has resulted in this imposition of rents much above the 'reasonable' level.

Hence these 'privileged' council tenants are by now paying rents much above the level paid by their fellow-workers, even before any scheme of Differential Rents is imposed. Figures published by the Oxford University Institute of Statistics (based on a survey made in 1951-52) show that Council tenants in the household income range £400-£599 were paying 9.5 per cent. of it in rents and rates, while private landlord's tenants in the same income groups were paying 7.2 per cent. A survey in 1955 would certainly reveal a much wider discrepancy between the two. Under a Differential Scheme, just introduced by Ealing Borough Council, a man earning a net wage of £7 will pay 24s. 9d. rent, and at least 10s. rates for a 3-bedroomed house— *i.e.*, 24.75 per cent. of income. *Housing Statistics 1953-54* published by the Institute of Municipal Treasurers and Accountants show the highest net rent for 3-bedroomed houses to be 56s. 7d. (Liverpool) and for 2-bedroomed houses 35s. 6d. (Finchley, London) and rates are additional.

The tenants' reaction to the developing process of injustice, imposition and slander, has been increasingly impressive and is at last making its first impact on public conscience.

When rent rises first began to be imposed in 1948-49, tenants tended to accept them, though in many a place a tenants' association was hurriedly formed by some proportion of them and attempts made to get a deputation received by the Housing Committee. Such associations were often ignored, or if recognised as representative, a deputation was declined, or given pretty short shrift if it was grudgingly received. No withdrawal or modification of the rise was entertained however. All this was done without any real public activity, nobody outside the Council estate ever knew anything much of the matter and no sympathy was evident amongst the local people generally. Too often individual councillors denounced the tenants' mild efforts as a 'Communist stunt'.

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In this period, however, a number of these local tenants' associations held one or two small conferences in London and established a National Association which has developed into a recognised body giving leadership, and guidance in all aspects of tenants' struggle. This national body was successful—through conferences, visiting speakers, publications and a monthly magazine—in influencing tenants towards better organisation, propaganda and tactics. The disputes between local authorities and their tenants were, resultantly, conducted thenceforward at a higher level of militancy, with fuller knowledge of how to expose a Council's case and with greater local publicity to the tenants' case and their fight.

In the past year, the renewed attempts by local authorities to get more revenue through rent rises enshrined in all sorts of varieties of the Differential Rents system (always with the unavoidable Means Test) have evoked a degree of fierce resistance from the tenants unmatched since the historic fight of private landlords' tenants which led to the passing of the first Rent Act. Meetings are now attended at the outset by the majority of the tenants. Audiences of a thousand or more are not unusual. Feelings run high. The new burden is regarded as insupportable. The hated Means Test and the enquiries to employers to verify earnings (indispensable features of any rent-by-income scheme) arouse easily imagined rage. From the floor almost always comes the proposition: Don't let's pay any increase. Don't answer the Council's questionnaire on family circumstances. A rent 'strike' is contemplated. Tenants in thousands have surrounded town halls. Masses of tenant families, sometimes with bands and effigies, have marched through their area and forced their fellow-citizens to pay attention. Speakers have gone to explain matters to local Trade Unions and Trades Council meetings. Funds have been raised from such bodies and from workers in local factories. Councillors have been seen in their own homes and accosted in public. Tenants have refused to pay the increase, some have gone to Court.

Rendered desperate by the present and threatened deprivations in living conditions through the burden of excessive rent, and outraged by treatment smelling of old Poor Law and notorious Unemployment Assistance Board probings, the tenants are fighting back. Their activities are now directed less at the Councils than at the electors, in whose name, but without consultation or mandate, the Councils are bringing misery to thousands of homes and bringing the noble effort to raise housing standards by social enterprise into utter disrepute. Their object is to force Councils, through the effect

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of public opinion and greater knowledge of all the facts, to abandon seeking a false solution to their undoubted problem at the expense of their tenants' welfare and happiness and to turn to Parliament and Government for the real, and much overdue, solutions.

The tenants' fight can be a fight of the entire Labour movement. The immediate issue in each locality is desperate enough to warrant that. But there is a larger and graver issue at stake. The whole future of municipal housing is in the balance and with it all chances of replacing millions of out-of-date sub-standard homes and of providing separate homes for the thousands who lack them still. For Differential Rent schemes, with their fake proofs that only a minority of tenants need a subsidy 'with today's big wages', are undermining the whole subsidy system without which municipal housing will come to an early halt.

Labour Councils and local Labour Parties must see the true reason for the bitterness their actions have aroused. When tenants criticise and attack rent rises and rent-by-income schemes, they are not ungratefully 'stabbing in the back' their well-meaning local Council and the entire local Labour Party (as alleged in Hammersmith for example). They are putting up a fight to defend their family living standards and, at the same time, a fight for the very existence of municipal housing; in other words, decent housing at rents the workers can afford. This is a question for the *whole* working class.

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UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF FREDERICK ENGELS

[We continue this month with a second selection of the newly-discovered Engels letters written to Laura, the second daughter of Karl Marx, and her husband Paul Lafargue. The letter to Paul, of June 28, 1891, was in French and has been specially translated. It should be noted that in the three-volume book shortly to be published by Editions Sociales, *the letters will appear both in French and in English.—Ed., L.M.]*

London, May 4, 1891.

MY DEAR LÖHR,

Yesterday was glorious, both as to weather and demonstration. Louise,[17] Sam M.[18] and I went there at 2, the platforms extended in an immense arc across the Park, the procession began to march in at 2.30 and had not done by 4.15, indeed fresh procession came in up to 5 o'clock. I was on Edward's platform with Sam, Louise on Tussy's. The crowd was immense, about the same or more even than last year.

Now a little gossip about the history of the affair. It has been almost exclusively Edward's and Tussy's work, and they had to fight it through from beginning to end. There was of course a deal of friction, but the Trades' Congress last Septbr at L'pool and the changed majority (in favour of *Legal* 8 hours) had considerably smoothed the way. Shipton[19] was awfully polite to Edward, but obstructive in many small matters, and threatened to throw up everything if his right (divine?) to be Marshal in command of the procession should be ever questioned. Well they let him, it will probably be the last time he will appear *hoch zu Ross* [on his high horse].

The principal thing was that the resolution was passed in the form proposed by our people, and that they carried in the joint committee (5 from the Trades Council, 5 from the Demonstration Committee).

Now for the fun—The S.D.F. At first they sent 3 delegates to the Demonstr. Committee where Edward was chairman. But after a few meetings they remained absent, and were struck off the rolls. Then the S.D.F. applied to the Trades Council for 2 platforms for themselves, as they had last year. But Shipton himself suggested to the joint Committee that this would never do, and so it was

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rejected, as in the same way every Trades Union might have asked for 2 platforms. Then the S.D.F. announced in their *Moniteur* that they would hold a meeting of their own with four platforms and red flags. Unfortunately they had to join our procession from the Embankment in order to get into the Park in an orderly and showy manner, and once there, marched off about 100 yards and hold there their promised meetings,—without proper platforms, we had big carts, they only chairs. They were just near enough to reckon upon some stragglers from our overflow, and just far enough to show how few of them they were able to attract.

The decisive thing had been, for them, the resolution of the Demonstr. Committee: that every association affiliated to them, should pay 5/- *for every branch* towards general expenses. Thus, the S.D.F. would have had either to pay 5/- for the many bogus branches they exhibit in their *Moniteur*, or else own they were bogus. And that decided their final retreat.

They have been made to feel their real position, and that is: the same position with the Germans in the Socialistic Labour Party in America hold there, that of a *sect*. And that is their position, though they are real live Englishmen. It is very characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon race and their peculiar mode of development, that both here and in America the people who, more or less, have the correct theory *as to the dogmatic side of it*, become a mere sect because they cannot conceive that living theory of action, of working with the working class at every possible stage of its development, otherwise than as a collection of dogmas to be learnt by heart and recited like a conjuror's formula or a Catholic prayer. Thus the real movement is going on outside the sect, and leaving it more and more. The Canning Town Branch of the Federation sticks to Edward and Tussy in spite of Hyndman and marches with our people, and that is their strongest branch. Since the Dockstrike the S.D.F. had for a time profited by the general socialist revival, but that is over now, they are fast for cash for their new Hall in the Strand, and the decline has set in again. And as their friends and allies the Possibilists are eating each other up as fast as they can, they cannot even brag with their grand foreign connexions.

Sam Moore was very much struck with the immense progress made here during the 2 years of his absence. He, by the bye, is very well, likes the climate and easy life amazingly and will, I am almost sure, be homesick for Africa after a while.

I saw Cunninghame Graham[20] on our platform (No. 6, Edward's, see *Chronicle*) but he could tell me much more about Paris than was

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said in Paul's letter Friday afternoon. After all I hope the Committee's demonstration in the evening did *not* be a failure, as, Graham says, was that of the Broussists.[21] If we cannot work together, we have all an interest in having as much of a demonstration as possible.

It's no use crying over spilt milk, but I cannot help thinking that our friends made a right mistake thanks to the usual French inclination of miscalculating the strength of the relative forces. A very heroic disposition sometimes, *'mais ce n'est pas la guerre'*.[22] After all we intended to work as usual with the Blanquists,[23] and *they* were not bound by the resolutions of Calais and Lille. These resolutions could only bind our people; the Blanquists too might have passed resolutions as to the 1st of May and then said they were bound by them. Why thus determine beforehand by our own selves and without our only allies, how the demonstration was to be arranged *in Paris* where we are in a, at present, decided minority? Why thus *froisser* [rub up the wrong way] our only allies? *Froisser* them still more by the plan of delegations to the *mairies* and summonses to all the *élus* [town councillors]) to meet the delegates there? a plan which on the face of it they were sure to repudiate? I am not at all astonished that they fell into the arms of the Allemanists after this. At least that is the view I come to from the information I possess, there may be another side to the case but I do not know it.

We have very little news from Germany to-day. Hamburg had a splendid procession, 80.000 according to *D. Telegraph*. From Berlin very little news; the Havas of Berlin, Wolff,[24] has orders from Govt. to suppress everything, and the London correspondents are all under the influence of the *Freisinnigen* [Freethinkers], and do equally the same.

When we came home last night, we wound up with a Maibowl the Maikraut of which Percy had sent us from Ryde. We put in 4 bottles Moselle, 2 claret and champagne, and finished it—we, Bernsteins[25] and the Tussys. Late in the evening Cunninghame Graham came in and actually had two or three glasses of it—he seems to have left his teetotalism at Tangiers. There is a slight but rather agreeable *Kater,* kept in proper bounds this evening by a bottle of Pilsener.

Why did not Paul turn up? Graham says he was too tired—his name figures as a speaker on platform 8, with Jack Burns.

Viele Grüsse von Louise.

Dein alter,

F.E.

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MY DEAR LAFARGUE, Ryde, June 28, 1891.

I have been here at Pumps' since the day before yesterday, and I shall stay here until Thursday, July 2, when I am going back to London. Meanwhile Louise has sent me your letter of the 25th. Happily I have a blank cheque that I can send you with this, filled in for £20. Good Luck! Your preparations for defence seem very good and I hope that you get the seat in the Chamber without the conviction.

Now another thing. You will find enclosed a letter by *Field* (*Star*, June 25) and a reply from Burrows, obviously drafted by Hyndman. Is it true as Field says that *you* have *'authorised'* him to commit the blunder he has committed? We cannot believe it. But in any case, see what a letter from you to this Field has now brought about, a letter probably perfectly innocent in itself. This Field, a good fellow but burning to play some sort of role—even at the cost of doing disservice to the cause he wishes to serve—puts himself forward as acting in the name of *your* party, and consequently of *ours*. He makes an appeal, as 'authorised' agent, to the Trade Unions, etc., and, *if he is known* at all, it is as an old associate of *Champion*, who is more despised than ever since his Australian exploits!

The ground was thus too well prepared for Mr. Hyndman for him not to seize upon it. See the reply. All the aforesaid blunders by Field, all the weak points in his letter are skilfully taken up, and Mr. Field has done nothing but give an advertisement to the Possibilists.

Nobody here can pick up the gauntlet. First of all we don't know what has passed between you and Field. Then the *Star*, if it accepts a reply from us (which is doubtful, more than doubtful) will cut us off short after having given the last word to Burrows. And the position that Field has put us in is so stupid that we are only left the hope that this correspondence in the *Star* will be forgotten as quickly as possible.

At all events, if you want us to continue working here *with success* for the Congress—*forbid* Field *absolutely* and immediately to publish anything whatever *in which he makes use of the authority of the foreign Secr. of the workers' party*. And give no pretext to anyone at all here to publish anything whatever with your authorisation without having consulted us. Otherwise we should do better to withdraw and leave everything to chance. To be under Champion's protection, that we have been spared hitherto!

All was going well here. We were working quietly, but without relaxing, and it is not the noise made by the press (*where we have*

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no organ, don't forget!) at this moment that we need for success. But also, we have the right to ask our own friends not to put a spoke in our wheel. We have had all we want from Brussels, not without difficulty, but we have had it and we have made use of it; and that should be enough for you without the French marxist party giving the appearance of wanting to play the convenor of the congress and to assume a role to which it has no right. Lastly, tell us what you have written to Field, so that we can try, verbally at least, to lessen the unfortunate influence of this blunder of Field's.

Laura's letter about Longuet is still in Tussy's hands, I shall get it back after my return. We thank Laura very much for this important information; at last the business is about to start, but after reading the articles of the code we doubt whether the family Council can do much beyond naming a guardian. Tussy says she has written to Laura.

We have old Harney here. He spent a month at Ventnor, where he lost his chronic bronchitis but once more caught his rheumatic gout. Yesterday we fetched him here by carriage. He is full of aches and complaints, poor devil, but always merry as soon as the pains leave him. He will return to Richmond in a few days.

Pumps' house is small, but pretty, with a garden *front and back,* a mass of fruit of all kinds, vegetables and even potatoes, a greenhouse with vines full of grapes, etc. . . . For the children it is excellent, but will Percy do business? His brothers do not seem in too much of a hurry to support him with the necessary materials, however we shall see.

Pumps, Percy, Harney send their best greetings to Laura and you and me too!

Bien à vous,

F.E.

REFERENCES

[17]Louise Kautsky. First wife of Karl Kautsky, and secretary of Engels

[18]Sam Moore (1838-1912). The English translator of Marx's *Capital.*

[19]G. Shipton, secretary of London Trades Council and editor of *Labour Standard.*

[20]Robert Bontine Cunninghame Graham (1852-1936), English Socialist and writer, from 1886-1892 a Member of Parliament.

[21]Paul Brousse (1844-1912), French petty-bourgeois socialist, one of the leaders of the Possibilists. Later an anarchist.

[22]A reference to the French comment on the Balaclava Charge of the Light Brigade. 'C'est magnifique mais ce n'est pas la Guerre' ['Magnificent—but not war'].

[23]A. Blanqui (1805-1881), French revolutionary leader, advocate of the dictatorship of the proletariat but on basis of conspiratorial work of an élite, without understanding the role of mass action and a mass party. Despite this Marx and Engels were able to work with Blanqui and his followers.

[24]Havas, Wolff. German Telegraphic Agencies.

[25]Edward Bernstein (1850-1932), German Social Democrat, friend of Engels, who after Engels' death became notorious for his revisionist ideas that he wanted to introduce into the fundamental teachings of Marxism. Later an open opportunist.

(To be continued)

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A PROSPECT OF PORTLAND PLACE

HOW vast the benefits which *Portland Place*
Confers upon the patient British race,
In cultured tones conveying, day by day,
The modest virtues of *the British way:*
Freedom of thought, and liberty of speech—
But temperately, and not too much of each;
Fair play all round—but tactfully restricted
To those by awkward notions unafflicted.
In this, we claim superiority
To other versions of democracy:
And scorn our tactless Yankee allies, brash
Enough to boost Old Nick himself for cash,
Who plug *the True, the Beautiful, the Good,*
Between aperients and Breakfast Food.

How gentlemanly are compared with these,
Home, Light and Third's more subtle emphases;
What politic indoctrinations prove
The bland assumptions beaming from Lime Grove.
What need for propaganda to be ranted,
When taking all its principles for granted?
What need to force reactionary views
On listeners brainwashed daily by *the News?*

Here may be shown, by natural selection,
Facts coloured to a suitable complexion,
Tailored to fit the formula we like
In UNO, NATO, Parliament or strike,
And all complaints of bias quickly be
Countered by claims of *objectivity.*

For objectivity, our proudest boast,
Ensures that each unpleasing cause is lost,
And each approved one strengthened, by the function
Of intonation, or Announcer's Unction:
The reverently lowered tone that means
Some unimportant action of the Queen's,
With all the cadence of an upper servant's
Respect for niceties of class observance;
The solemnly devout enunciation,

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Conveying sycophantic approbation
Used for some barbarous threat by Dulles or
A General longing for a NATO war.
But ah! what different utterance we hear,
How each sub-acid note conceals a smear,
In mentioning certain countries, which incite
The automatic prefix *'satellite';*
Or some trade union, by the rules required
To be described as *'Communist-inspired'*.

Conditioned nine times daily by the news,
We soften up the listeners for views
Which the Director of the Spoken Word
Considers it expedient to be heard—
Screened lest subversive doctrines should be taught
And guaranteed immune from *dangerous thought.*

Sandwiched between a corny comic and
'Poet & Peasant' played by Foden's band;
Blank and His Boys paying their way by plugs;
The Countess Dash on show-ring tips for pugs;
Beethoven's Fifth; a talk on smoke abatement;
Some masterpieces of British understatement
Ensures that listeners, overseas and home,
Accept the creeds of Washington and Rome,
And clearly understand that doubt and sin
Beyond the waters of the Elbe begin.
Naught may go out, except by accident,
Offensive to a Pope or President,
And if a Mrs. Knight make mild transgression,
Full absolution shall be sought by full confession:
Directors-General find a Canossa trip
A needful ploy in B.B.C.-manship,
But take more dignified evasive action
At signs of Protestant dissatisfaction.
While thus observing due obedience
To Cardinals, Archbishops, Presidents,
The Foreign Office and the T.U.C.,
Within these generous limitations we
Are free to let unfettered fancy roam
Around the dial from Third to Light and Home.

By turning knobs, we may acquire with ease
The benefits of noted *expertise,*
For Portland Place at its disposal has

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Authorities on Dead Sea scrolls and jazz,
Bird-watching, calceolarias, spoken verse,
Psychiatry, egg-dishes, wigs and Erse,
And gladly pays them guineas to expound
The mysteries for which they are renowned.
Anglicans analyse th'*Establishment,*
And nonconformists comment on *Dissent,*
And Romish prelates preach, without objection,
The doctrine of *the Immaculate Conception.*
Tories extol the claims of property,
And Transport House's trusties make reply,
While even Liberal leaders have free air
To expound the dying cause of *laissez-faire.*

But who shall *Marx* interpret, who define
The Communists' conception of their line?
The answer's simple; we can soon lay on
Some tame, reliable anti-Marxist don,
Who from his dreaming spires can smartly trip
The Soviet statesman for un-Marxmanship,
Leaving the guileless listener perplexed
By careful garbling of a Marxist text.
Dons glib, dons venal, dons that we can trust,
Will prove that socialism must go bust:
By these shall Soviet bankruptcy be shown,
Who could not run a whist-drive on their own.
How well are aims, collectively decided
By Communists, effectively derided
By eager seekers after place to whom
The intrigues of the Senior Common Room,
The old-boy network's power, represent
The flower of gentlemanly government,
Imputing motives such as lie behind
The iron curtain of the donnish mind.

And when to Marxist practice next we turn,
What seedy hangers-on their stipends earn
By rapt descriptions of the ruin found
Wherever Peoples' Governments abound?
They best have Eastern Europe understood
Who fled their countries for their countries' good:
Those who the task of reconstruction shirk,
Willing to whine and yet afraid to work,
Are chosen by the B.B.C. to tell
How workers' rule has made their countries hell.
Ex-landlords who will never see more rent;
Ex-liberals, connoisseurs of discontent;

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Ex-journalists, their only scoop a smear;
Ex-diplomats who seek a holy war;
Ex-generals with nothing to command;
Ex-peasants, lifelong strangers to the land;
Each daggers-drawn with all the other ex-es,
Their only bond the B.B.C.'s cash nexus,
Each eagerly his native land disparages,
And suffers for his principles—at *Claridge's*.

Solicitude at *Portland Place* will spare
Our native Reds the perils of the air,
For listeners find it easier to resist
The lure of voting for a Communist
If Pollitt does not speak; how truly better,
And much more British, to observe the letter
Of freedom's laws; no *censorship* need fall
On Pollitt if he does not speak at all.

And so we glory in our B.B.C.—
Restrained, refined, and manifestly free—
And willing, when *Geneva* warms the air,
To admit a note of regulated cheer.
A dutifully cordial welcome for
The rise in international temperature
Conceals the rôle it previously played
In reaching depths of *minus* centigrade.
If *Downing Street* finds *summit* weather kind
Shall *objectivity* be far behind?

JUDITH TODD

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HEROIC STORY

WILLIAM GALLACHER

I HAVE, in recent times, read books dealing with the March of History, as it has expressed itself in different parts of the world. Great books, many of them, and here, added to their number, and taking its place amongst the best, is the *History of The Scottish Miners,** the third historical work about miners in Britain written by R. Page Arnot. Of this volume I would say that, while it deals with a particular industry, it epitomises in general the long bitter struggles of the working class from semi-serfdom to their present powerful position in face of a decaying capitalism.

Coal had an early start in Scotland. Take the opening lines:

> Coal, the main source of heat and light and power in nearly every country, has been dug in Scotland for years beyond reckoning. Eighteen hundred years ago the Roman army of occupation between Forth and Clyde were using coal.

From then on till the twelfth century there are no discoverable records of its use but in that century

> We get on durable parchment the record of *carbonaria*, or as they are called in Acts of Parliament, the coal-heughs. (Page 6.)

Having been introduced to coal we are then introduced to the coal-getter—the miner. By Act of Parliament (Scottish) he was, with his children, condemned to serfdom. It is an appalling story as set out from official and semi-official records. The author quotes Lord Henry Cockburn who remarks, 'Wives, daughters and sons went on from generation to generation under the system which was the family doom'.

The story of the ruthless exploitation of women and children is almost unbelievable. Profit has never had any regard for human life. That is exemplified in the colonies at the present time. It had no regard for the miners till they were strong enough to defend themselves. In 1824, following the repeal of the Corn Laws, there is the record of the first beginnings of unions among the miners, with an ever-increasing agitation on hours, wages and child labour. By 1840, on a motion by Lord Shaftesbury, a Commission was appointed to enquire into the Employment of Children. I will only give one quotation from the report of one of the Commissioners, R. H. Franks. From a pit in Peebleshire of which the Rev. J. J. Beresford was the leaseholder we get:

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*A History of the Scottish Miners from the Earliest Times, by R. Page Arnot. Illustrations drawn and compiled by Reginald T. F. Turner. (Allen & Unwin. 446 pp. 30s.)

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Margaret Watson, 16 years of age, coal-bearer.

I was first taken below to carry coals when I was six years old, and have never been away from the work, except a few evenings in the summer months, when some of us go to Carlops, two miles over the moor, to learn the reading: reads a little. . . . We often have had bad air below, had some a short time since, and lost brother by it; he sunk down and I tried to draw him out but the air stopped my breath and I was forced to gang.

Following on the great Chartist campaign a new impetus was given to trade unionism and in 1841, the Miners' Association of Great Britain and Ireland was formed in Wakefield. Its organisers came into Scotland and for a time had a measure of success but by 1847-48 it was a victim of the economic crisis and a blight seemed to fall on the district unions in England and Scotland. But the lessons learned weren't lost:

> New men and new ideas, shaped from the lessons of the past, were preparing to take the stage. One such man, who was later to represent a very great advance in the organisation and outlook of the miners, was at that time growing up and coming to manhood. He was a young miner who was destined to become the foremost leader of the British miners and, for a period, of the whole trade union movement. His name was Alexander McDonald. (Page 37.)

From McDonald's great work of agitation there developed the conditions that brought forth Keir Hardie and Smillie and new and potent advances in Scottish miners' organisation. But between the rise of Alexander McDonald and the coming of his successors, there were many fierce and bitter struggles in the mining areas of the country, including the establishment of the 8-hours day by the miners of Fife. This great event was celebrated by an annual Fife Gala, which has now been merged in the All-Scotland Gala.

With Hardie and Smillie and a number of other young miners, all influenced by the new wave of socialist propaganda that was sweeping the country, considerable advances were made in organisation, leading to the Scottish Federation which was affiliated to the Miners' Federation of Great Britain in place of the one or two district unions hitherto affiliated. From then on, while the district unions retained their identity, a Scottish Executive, appointed at an annual conference, represented the Scottish Miners. This continued as the form of organisation till the coming of Abe Moffat, who, with a number of active colleagues, succeeded in amalgamating the six district unions into one Scottish Miners' Union, now the Scottish Area of the National Union of Mineworkers, which came into existence with the amalgamation of the district unions throughout the whole of Britain. But again we must note the titanic struggles that took place in the intervening period. Surely no body

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of workers anywhere have been through so much, and suffered so deeply as the miners. I have had much association with the miners of Scotland. From my earliest days as a working-class agitator, I couldn't fail to note the fierce and unquenchable hatred for the coal-owners, wherever I went. And the cause was not far to seek. Their conditions of work, with disaster and death ever at hand. The pit rows which constitute their homes, disgracefully inadequate for health or for rearing their families, with hunger only too often their grisly companion, while the coal-owners and their families lived in idle luxury, regardless of the 'blood on the coal'.

The great Seven Months' Lock-out in 1926, following the betrayal of the General Strike, was but one outstanding example of the many harsh battles the miners have had to fight in their long struggle against the rapacious coal-owners. It can be understood, therefore, how gladly they welcomed the decision taken by the Labour Government to nationalise the mines. This was what they had advocated for long enough. But the nationalisation of the mines has not worked out as they would have expected it. The coal-owners are still the first charge and the old type of official still runs the mines. Big changes are still required before the Miners' Charter gives the miners the life to which they are entitled. The Scottish Miners and their leaders are fully conscious of this and as their Conference and Executive discussions and resolutions show, they are determined to bring these changes about at the earliest opportunity. They have a grand and powerful organisation and a leadership that stands out for its energy and its integrity. In the forefront is Abe Moffat of whom the miners declare 'he's the best we ever had'. He is certainly in the best traditions of earlier leaders, with a Marxist understanding of the class struggle that they lacked. The latter part of this history brings out in clear relief his great qualities as a miners' leader. You must read this book. It is Marxism in life or living Marxism. You must get others to read it. As I said at the outset, it expresses the March of History as it goes on all over the world. The madmen who can only see profit will try by every means 'to turn the clock back'—to stop the March of History. They can never do it. It goes on, more powerful with every day that passes, and the Scottish Miners will not fail their fellows, will not betray their own history. They are of the march and on the march and they will keep marching till the goal—the goal of Socialism and lasting Peace—has been won throughout the world. Here is a book that will live and will give inspiration to all who read it.

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Book Reviews

TWO KINDS OF GREATNESS

Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Volume III. (260 pp. Lawrence & Wishart, *6s.*)

TWO kinds of interest, two kinds of importance, two kinds of greatness inhere in this book. On the one hand there is the intrinsic greatness of the writer himself and the interest and importance of what he has to say. On the other hand the march of events has invested his words with the character of world history. The first two volumes covered the revolutionary civil wars in China (1926-36) and the war of resistance to Japanese aggression (1937-38). This, the third volume, brings the story up to 1941, a mere fourteen years ago. So short a time ago as that China was still the football of Japan and the bourgeois leaders of China were continually joining the Japanese imperialists in kicking her about. If now China is taking its rightful leading place among world powers this is due in large measure to the guidance given by Mao Tse-tung. And if, a matter of still greater importance, the advent of China to economic and political greatness will hasten the end of the era of power politics and the dawn of world socialism, this too is due in large measure to Mao Tse-tung. Here in this book are the arguments, here are the decisions, here are the directives which brought about in so few years changes so momentous.

But there is a further interest and importance in this book. No one who studies it will think that Mao Tse-tung became the architect of these great victories because of some freak of genius. Mao Tse-tung himself is the child of Marxism, and the emancipation of the Chinese people from their long bondage is the work of Marxism. Without Marx no Lenin, without Lenin no Stalin, without Lenin and Stalin, no Mao Tse-tung. Without the Russian revolution no Chinese revolution. Theoretically the realisation of this truth is of the greatest importance to us at this time. As the imperialists are forced to adopt a policy of co-existence with communism they seek to make the best of a bad job by accepting the brute fact of its existence but denying the theory which explains it. The idea of a science of history comes under the heaviest fire. The best assurance of the existence of this new science is to observe it in action. Take the central section of this book, the fifty pages called *On New Democracy,* and study there the application of a science of history by which the future was decisively shaped. The existence of a science of history does not mean that anyone who reads a textbook of Marxism can foretell the future, as the critics allege we believe, any more than the reading of a textbook of physics can make one a great discoverer. Nevertheless it is the existence of science that produces an Einstein and the existence of science that produces a Mao Tse-tung.

B. FARRINGTON

TRIAL IN KENYA

The Trial of Jomo Kenyatta, by Montagu Slater. (256 pp. Secker & Warburg. *18s.*)

WHEN war was launched by Her Majesty's Government upon a section of Her Majesty's African subjects in Kenya on October 20, 1952 (the so-called 'Emergency'), it began with the round-up of African political leaders. Jomo Kenyatta, with the rest of the top leadership of the Kenya African Union, the mass political party of the Africans, was

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'detained'. Recently it has been made known officially that he must not expect ever again to be free during his life's span. At present, however, Kenyatta is not 'detained' but is 'imprisoned'. Tried with five others on charges of management and membership of 'Mau Mau' he was convicted and sentenced to seven years' imprisonment—as an episode, so to speak, in his lifetime of detention. This book is a summary of the record of the trial. In view of the Government's power and intention to detain Kenyatta, apparently for life—without a trial—one may wonder what motive the authorities had for launching this prosecution at all. Kenyatta in his final speech on behalf of himself and his colleagues put forward their view that the purpose was essentially to discredit the K.A.U.:

> We are not guilty . . . we feel that this case . . . has been so arranged as to make scapegoats of us in order to strangle the Kenya African Union, the only African political organisation which fights for the rights of the African people.

The fact that a few weeks after their conviction K.A.U. was proscribed seems to lend support to this contention, particularly in view of the prosecution argument that Mau Mau was a secret terrorist organisation for which K.A.U. provided the legal cover.

Mr. Slater's book will help to provide the solution—not so much by any expression of opinion by the author but because it presents the material from which the reader can draw his own conclusions. Having set out two specific questions to be answered—'Were the findings justified by the evidence?' and 'Did the accused have a fair trial?', the author takes us step by step through all the stages of the trial and the appeals. We get not merely the highlights created by the clashes between the counsel engaged in the case and between D. N. Pritt, Q.C., counsel for Kenyatta, and the Magistrate, but a sober, clear story of the facts and arguments put forward both by the Government and the accused. The meticulous precautions taken by Mr. Slater to avoid any bias in the presentation of the evidence are described in the opening chapter. The result is a fascinating account of one of the historic trials of our time—and, inevitably, a wealth of information about the conditions of struggle of the Kenya Africans. As Mr. Slater says, in this case British justice was itself on trial. He adds that in such a case, the implications of which 'reach forward into the future history of the whole African Continent', it is at least as important that there should be an appeal 'even beyond Her Majesty's judicial committee of the Privy Council, to the reader in his arm-chair. . . .'

Read this book—and judge for yourself.

RALPH MILLNER

EAST AFRICA

East Africa Royal Commission 1953-1955 Report. (Cmd. 9475. pp. xiv and 482. 4 folding maps. H.M.S.O. *17s. 6d.*)

Economic Development in Rhodesia and Nyasaland, by C. H. Thompson and H. W. Woodruff. (pp. 205. Dobson. *21s.*)

BETWEEN them, these two publications cover the whole of Eastern and Central Africa between the Sudan and Mozambique; or, if you like, the whole area of white settlement between the Sahara and the Limpopo. It is an area in determining whose future India will have a voice at

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least as important as Britain, and where the most important voice of all will, of course, be African. Neither of these works discusses the Indian interest in the region, and both assume that the African interest must be subordinated to what they consider the economic needs of British East Africa on the one hand and the new Central African Federation on the other. Both works give a careful and up-to-date account of the stage which economic development has so far reached, and they analyse many of the difficulties to which its unbalanced character has led. Their emphasis is on the low productivity of African labour, the patchy distribution of rainfall and exploitable natural resources, and the dependence of such material progress as has been achieved on immigrant capital and skill.

Mr. Thompson and Mr. Woodruff, who are Government officials in the Rhodesian service, conclude that there can be no further progress without more importations of capital and of trained personnel. On the whole, they are content to leave the matter there, since their main object is to describe the local situation at the time of the forcible imposition of a federal constitution on Nyasaland and the Rhodesias. The Royal Commission Report goes much further. It harks back in a systematic and wholesale way to the principles of the *laissez faire* school, and proposes the imposition of a one hundred per cent. free enterprise economy, riding roughshod over tribal institutions and the vested interests of European and Indian settlers alike. It is a blueprint for a pure or ideal capitalism, from which the concept of welfare economics has been resolutely banished. Everything is subordinated to the unregulated working of the forces of a free market as a means of 'integrating the indigenous peoples into the world economy'. The world economy is not defined, but it seems likely that it does not include that enormous sector of the world whose economic arrangements rest upon a socialist foundation. The ideology of the Royal Commission is of a whole-heartedly counter-revolutionary complexion, and its report is a forlorn attempt to make Africa safe for unrestricted and planless economic 'freedom'.

It is an odd experience to read the work of authors who are so unaware as these commissioners of everything that is going on in the world around them, indeed of everything that has happened in the world in the last hundred years.

LEONARD BARNES

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FROM THE *LABOUR MONTHLY* OF 25 YEARS AGO

SOCIALISTS AND THE EMPIRE

The choice presented to the workers by the present Empire policy and propaganda, whether the direct bourgeois propaganda of the 'Empire Crusade', or the 'socialistic' dressing up of the same propaganda by the Labour Party and the Trades Union General Council, is thus a plain one. The Empire policy means, first, the intensified exploitation of the colonial peoples. It means, second, the lowering of the standards of the British workers. It means, third, the direct preparation of imperialist war. It means, fourth, ever-renewed wars of suppression against the colonial revolution. If the British workers were to follow the Labour Party and Trade Union leadership into this path, and seek to join hands with the imperialist exploiters in the delusory hope to achieve by this means an economic recovery for themselves, they would not only be cutting themselves off from the international working class and setting themselves up as conscious sharers in the exploitation and bloody suppression of the hundreds of millions of colonial slaves, with the heavy consequences to which such an antagonism must give rise, but they would at the same time be forging their own chains the more strongly and defeating the possibility of their own advance. The alternative path, the path of common struggle with the colonial hundreds of millions against the already weakening imperialist exploiters, offers not only the means to defeat the immediate capitalist attack, but also the certainty of rapid advance, across the wreckage of the Empire slave system, to the world victory of socialism.

From *The New Empire Socialism* (Notes of the Month), by R.P.D., September, 1930.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

BOOKS

The Common Secondary School, by Brian Simon. Lawrence & Wishart. 176 pp. 9s. 6d.
The 13th Juror, by Steven Nelson. Masses & Mainstream, New York; Collet's, London. 252 pp. 12s.
Silas Timberman, by Howard Fast. Bodley Head. 256 pp. 12s. 6d.
William Morris, by E. P. Thompson. Lawrence & Wishart. 908 pp. 50s.
Bryn Roberts, by W. W. Craik. Allen & Unwin. 238 pp. 15s.
Cross Purposes in Wage Policy, by R. G. Hawtrey. Longman's. 148 pp. 7s. 6d.
China Phœnix, by Peter Townsend. Cape. 405 pp. 25s.
Science Versus Idealism, by Maurice Cornforth. Lawrence & Wishart. 464 pp. 27s. 6d.
The Ninth Wave, by Ilya Ehrenburg. Lawrence & Wishart. 896 pp. 12s. 6d.
Privileged Persons, by Douglas Goldring. Richards Press. 280 pp. 12s. 6d.
Imperialism and Chinese Politics, by Hu Sheng. Foreign Languages Press, Peking. 308 pp. 5s. 6d.
Trade Unions and the Law, by H. Vester & A. Gardner. Methuen. 120 pp. 7s. 6d.

PAMPHLETS

Scottish Pride and Other Poems, by Joe Corrie. Galloway Gazette. 32 pp. 2s. 6d.
Christians and Africa, by Stanley G. Evans. Society of Socialist Clergy and Ministers. 12 pp. 6d.
Four Power Talks, by K. Zilliacus. Union of Democratic Control. 12 pp. 6d.
The Prospects for World Disarmament, by Wm. Warbey, M.P. Union of Democratic Control. 16 pp. 1s.
Adventure or Eclipse, by Barnett Stross, M.P. Union of Democratic Control. 6 pp. 4d.

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customers. Street-sellers are first-rate—if their pitch is the kind where they show magazines; it's useless to trouble them if that's not their line. Next, if you are confident it's a good place and there's a good show, don't worry if there's little sale for the first couple of months. Don't nag the customer, but be regular. Once you've got a firmly established routine—branch out.'

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I would be delighted to hear from others who are doing the same—and from those who want practical details on how to start.

Anniversaries recalled in our last issue reminded an ex-soldier teacher of his own. 'Ten years ago this month I spent a month in Kashmir. There I had the fortune to meet many of those wonderful people who were so soon to put Kashmir on the front page of the world press. One of the most memorable to me was the secretary of the Silk Workers' Union of Srinagar who combined the ardour of youth with the experience of a veteran. He no sooner learnt that I was British than he shot a question at me: "Have you a LABOUR MONTHLY?" And had I? No, but one arrived the next morning; because I had arranged to have it sent after me wherever I went during those war years.'

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OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS came from : Anon, 'London', 5s.; A.E.P. (Canada), 15s.; C. G. Roberts, 4s. 6d.; E. P. Young, 2s.; D. Wallis for L. Winters, 2s.; J. McNaught, 1s.; L. Naftalin, 12s.; C. Craven, 10s.; J.B. (Germany), £1; R. Gee, £1; G. W. Grainger, 2s.; C. O. Dicks, 2s.; P. J. Wallis, 12s.; O.M.F., 7s.; J. Peterson, 12s.; A. E. Portbury, 12s.; C. G. Small, 3s.; H. S. Richards, £5; A. J. Salmon, 1s. 6d.; A. D. Hazlewood, 2s.; R. Stubbs, 6s.; E. Blaxell, 2s.; R. Greenham, 1s.; A.W.K., 2s.; R. Barnes, 18s.

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